Dialogue Series of the UNEA resolution 7/3

Session: From Resolution to Action: Advancing Material Efficiency and Circularity Across Mineral and Metal Value Chains

Date: 14 October 2026 (09.00-10.30 CEST)
Location: Room NB.0 107 at World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Geneva
Online meeting link:
https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/313610259268683?p=DDR4H755BgCRMhoZ6g

Concept note

Minerals and metals are essential to economic development, infrastructure and the clean energy transition. Growing demand offers producer countries opportunities for local value addition, industrial development, decent jobs and increased revenues. At the same time, rising extraction and processing can place significant pressure on biodiversity, land and water resources; generate pollution, waste and greenhouse gas emissions; and affect human health and communities. Material efficiency and circularity can help reduce these pressures while strengthening the resilience of mineral and metal value chains.

Circularity begins with avoiding unnecessary material use and designing products and infrastructure to use fewer materials, last longer and be repaired, reused and remanufactured. It is broader than recycling. It also includes efficient production and processing, high-quality recycling, and environmentally sound resource recovery from mining waste and tailings. Across the full life cycle, these approaches can reduce waste and pollution, retain material value and moderate growth in demand for primary extraction.

Circularity will not remove the need for responsibly managed primary production in the foreseeable future. It should therefore complement stronger environmental and social performance in mining and processing. Its policies and benefits must also be equitable: developing and mineral-producing countries should be able to participate in circular value chains through local and regional value addition, skills, technology and infrastructure.

Since 2019, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has progressively advanced international cooperation on environmental sustainability of minerals and metals. UNEA resolution 4/19 strengthened the knowledge base and initiated international dialogue on mineral resource governance. UNEA resolution 5/12 led to 24 non-prescriptive proposals covering policies and tools, circularity, tailings management, mine closure and international cooperation. UNEA resolution 6/5 further emphasized international cooperation, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.

In December 2025, UNEA adopted resolution 7/3 on strengthening international cooperation on the environmentally sound management of minerals and metals. It requests UNEP to convene dialogues among Member States and relevant stakeholders on international cooperation, resource recovery from mining waste and tailings, best practices, and the capabilities needed to address the environmental aspects of minerals and metals.

This dialogue series is directly connected to the wider UN work on critical energy transition minerals. The UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals (CETM) recommends equitable targets and timelines for material efficiency and circularity across their entire life cycle. The UN Task Force on CETM, co-chaired by UNEP, UNCTAD and UNDP, is taking forward the Panel's principles and recommendations. The scene-setting presentation will introduce this work, while the discussion will allow country and stakeholder experiences to inform both the UNEA dialogue process and the complementary work of the Task Force.

Following a survey of Member States and stakeholders, material efficiency and circularity emerged as the topic of greatest interest for the UNEA 7/3 dialogues. This second dialogue builds on the first dialogue on environmental law and governance, which took place on 8 September 2026, and will take place in Geneva back-to-back with the 22nd IGF Annual General Meeting. It will bring together Member States, stakeholders, right holders, and partners.

Objective

The objective of the dialogue is to discuss and identify priorities, good practices and opportunities to strengthen international cooperation for advancing material efficiency and circularity across mineral and metal value chains. The dialogue will:

- Deepen a shared understanding of material efficiency and circularity across the full mineral and metal value chains, from extraction and processing to product design, use, reuse, remanufacturing, recycling and resource recovery;
- Review the initial findings on business cases for material efficiency and circularity across mineral and metal value chains and identify priorities and opportunities to support wider uptake;
- Exchange country and stakeholder experience on policies, business cases, technologies and practices that are already delivering environmental, economic and social benefits;
- Build on the discussions of the first dialogue on environmental law and governance, and discuss specific challenges and opportunities to achieve material efficiency and circularity for responsible minerals and metals value chains through policy and regulations;
- Identify barriers to implementation and scale-up, including gaps in data and metrics, infrastructure, technology, finance, markets, policy coherence, skills and institutional capacity;
- Examine how circularity can support value addition, economic diversification, decent work and benefit sharing in developing and mineral-producing countries, while avoiding burden shifting; and
- Identify priorities for international cooperation and practical inputs for subsequent dialogues under UNEA resolution 7/3, including relevant synergies with the UN Task Force on Critical Energy Transition Minerals.

Guiding questions

- Where can material efficiency and circularity deliver the greatest economic, environmental and social benefits, and what examples of good practices can be scaled up or lessons can be shared?
- What are the principal barriers and opportunities to implementing and scaling these approaches, particularly in developing and mineral-producing countries, and which capabilities, infrastructure, finance, technologies, reliable data and metrics, enabling markets, or policy/regulations measures are most needed?
- How can circularity policies and value chains support equitable value addition, decent work and benefit sharing in producing countries and communities, while avoiding the transfer of waste, pollution or economic burdens?
- What roles can governments, mining and processing companies, manufacturers, recyclers, investors and civil society play in advancing circularity across mineral and metal value chains?
- Where can international cooperation - including through the UNEA resolution 7/3 dialogue process - add the most value, and how should it complement the work of the UN Task Force on Critical Energy Transition Minerals and other existing initiatives?

Agenda (90 minutes)

Facilitator: Elisa Tonda, Chief, Industry Innovation Branch, Industry and Economy Division

Duration	Agenda item	Lead
20 min	**Breakfast and networking**	All participants
5 min	**Welcome and opening remarks**	Elisa Tonda, UNEP
15 min	**Scene-setting presentations:** Material Efficiency and Circularity across Mineral and Metal Value Chains: Legal and Governance Enablers for Good Governance Initial findings: Business Cases for Material Efficiency and Circularity across Mineral and Metal Value Chains	 Lais Paiva Siqueira, UNEP Rongbao Jiang, UNEP
45 min	**Open-floor dialogue structured around the guiding questions**	Moderated discussion
5 min	**Closing remarks**	Elisa Tonda, UNEP